

I think this is very important to point out because the other problem here is the massive amounts of debt that we're going to compile if this bill should be passed. Debt that is unpaid for—the stimulus bill not being paid for—will be passed along to future generations, children and grandchildren, or it will be sold, the wealth asset value of this country sold overseas to foreign debt holders, or it will come out in other forms of taxation such as inflation.

Mr. AKIN. Just reclaiming my time for a second, you're talking in kind of economic terms, but further, what does that mean to the average person in our district? It means a lower standard of living, doesn't it? It means you can't make ends meet. It means you're not going to buy the food you want to buy. And I yield again.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Inflation is a very regressive form of taxation, particularly among the most vulnerable among us.

With that, let me say, I don't want to see any family experience unemployment, any business take a downturn or any family experience a foreclosure. And with that said, I think it's very, very important that we work very hard to get this right, a plan that makes sense, that maximizes economic productivity through any type of new governmental policies that we set, but a plan that is also potentially paid for over time and that does have some new bold ideas in it.

One of the problems here as well, though, is that much of the spending is targeted to States, and some States like Nebraska, we've been very fortunate to be insulated from these larger downward economic trends. We have a strong ag economy that is hitting some bumps at the moment, but nonetheless, we also have a set of values, if you will, where people work hard and take responsibility for themselves and care for their neighbor. Businesses, as well as our citizens, have made prudential decisions about buying and lending, and we haven't suffered like the rest of the country in this regard.

But with that said, this bill effectively asks Nebraskans to subsidize other States that may have been poorly governing and want the Federal Government basically to make the tough decisions for them, not force them to make the tough decisions.

Mr. AKIN. Reclaiming my time, I think what you're saying in a polite, sort of sensitive way is California has been spending money at an incredible pace, and the question is, should Nebraska have to subsidize California? And that's really what we're talking about, isn't it? I yield back to the gentleman from Nebraska.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. I thank the gentleman for the time.

I think we are. It's a very important point to be made that a lot of communities in a lot of places have had to make choices with limited budgets to set priorities and have not rushed up to

Washington to say bail us out, help us out. They have made those tough choices responsibly, and it's places like those, like Nebraska and other places, that I fear are subsidizing other places that have not performed admirably in terms of governance.

Another point here is I think there are some bold, new, innovative ideas in this overall package. I think they could be potentially considered as stand-alone measures. President Obama has a strong focus on, for instance, alternative energy development for a sustainable energy future.

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This economic crisis was precipitated by, you recall, a very high spike in energy costs which accelerated other difficulties in the economy. But we've almost forgotten that now. Can you imagine where we would be if gas were \$4 a gallon right now? So we've dodged a bullet right there.

But trying to get underneath the question as to what our real economic vulnerabilities are, including our overdependence on foreign oil and fossil fuel in general, is an important policy consideration.

So there are some admirable components here that might ought to be considered as a part of a reasoned stimulus plan that has a payment schedule for it, or stand alone separately.

So we don't want to stand here and simply oppose everything in that regard. But we are halfway.

Mr. AKIN. Reclaiming my time.

I think we've got just a very short amount of time left.

But your point is so good. Our objective is not just to say what won't work but to say what won't work because we know it won't work, and instead, let's adopt something that's helping those families. I was talking about it earlier, the picture that just keeps jumping in my mind—and this is happening all over the world because of our lack of bold and decisive and disciplined action here—the picture that comes to my mind is the house with the foreclosure and the easy chair and the sofa sitting on the sidewalk. And I'm thinking about the mom or the dad of that family and the pressure that they feel where they're just dumped right out of their house. This is not just economic numbers, this is the people of our country.

I yield my last 30 seconds.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Well, again, I'm grateful.

We don't, again, want to see any family suffer any unemployment or suffer any situation like that. But I think this letter that I got today from a constituent back home from Gail in Fremont says quite a bit. She said, "I'm writing to let you know I oppose the stimulus, Congressman. I'm opposed," she adds, "to the overwhelming debt the government is all too willing to place on us with no long-range plan for getting us back on stable ground."

She goes on, "What is the Federal Government doing without during this

emergency?" She says, "In my home when there's no money, we do without. We don't spend money we don't have. I'd rather tighten my belt for a time than to live the rest of my life under the burden of increased taxes for this bloated stimulus package."

Unrestrained, unsustainable spending is the issue here, and we need to maximize economic productivity through smart thinking about what really is stimulus.

Mr. AKIN. Reclaiming my time.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

RELATING TO SELECTION OF MEMBERS TO SERVE ON INVESTIGATIVE SUBCOMMITTEE OF COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF OFFICIAL CONDUCT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. KILROY). Without objection, upon a joint determination under clause 5(a)(4) of rule X not later than February 27, 2009, the Chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct may select an uneven number of Members named under that rule to serve on an investigative subcommittee.

There was no objection.

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 11 of rule X, clause 11 of rule I, and the order of the House of January 6, 2009, the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following Members of the House to the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence:

Mr. HASTINGS, Florida
 Ms. ESHOO, California
 Mr. HOLT, New Jersey
 Mr. RUPPERSBERGER, Maryland
 Mr. TIERNEY, Massachusetts
 Mr. THOMPSON, California
 Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Illinois
 Mr. LANGEVIN, Rhode Island
 Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY, Pennsylvania
 Mr. SCHIFF, California
 Mr. SMITH, Washington
 Mr. BOREN, Oklahoma
 Mr. GALLEGLY, California
 Mr. THORNBERRY, Texas, and to rank after Mr. ROGERS, Michigan:
 Mrs. MYRICK, North Carolina
 Mr. BLUNT, Missouri
 Mr. MILLER, Florida
 Mr. KLINE, Minnesota
 Mr. CONAWAY, Texas

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO SELECT INTELLIGENCE OVERSIGHT PANEL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 4(a)(5) of rule X, and the order of the House of January 6, 2009, the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following Members of the House to the Select Intelligence

Oversight Panel of the Committee on Appropriations:

Mr. HOLT, New Jersey, Chairman
 Mr. OBEY, Wisconsin
 Mr. MURTHA, Pennsylvania
 Mr. REYES, Texas
 Mr. DICKS, Washington
 Mrs. LOWEY, New York
 Mr. SCHIFF, California
 Mr. ISRAEL, New York
 Mr. CALVERT, California, Ranking
 Minority Member
 Mr. LEWIS, California
 Mr. YOUNG, Florida
 Mr. HOEKSTRA, Michigan
 Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN, New Jersey

CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. ELLISON. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Tonight we're here for the Congressional Progressive Caucus, and I'm joined by my colleague, the honorable HANK JOHNSON, who hails from the State of Georgia. And we are the Progressive Caucus. And we're here week after week, month after month to help the American people understand that the progressive community throughout America has a group of people in Congress who are willing to stand up and stand strong and project a progressive vision for all of the Nation.

The Progressive Caucus has designed something we call the progressive message. So this is what we do. We come together, and we talk about our progressive vision for our country.

We started off only a few weeks ago talking about the need to hold the executives accountable and to not simply wipe things that happened in the past 8 years under the rug. Then we came back last week to talk about the economy and the stimulus package. And because we're facing a rising unemployment rate, foreclosure rate that is increasing, because people are losing their jobs, because things are getting tougher every day, we've got to stick with this issue of the economy so we can talk to people about which way forward, what do we do, what is the progressive message to help America go forward.

So with that, I want to introduce my colleague, my good friend from the great State of Georgia, to introduce himself and the topic tonight, Mr. HANK JOHNSON.

Congressman, let me yield to you. How are you doing?

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. I'm doing great.

Mr. ELLISON, you have been a shining light and a great example of a courageous congressman who doesn't run with the crowd and do what's popular but you do what's right, and I'm happy to join you tonight.

You know, I am deeply concerned—and have always been deeply concerned—about the fact that there's been a transfer of wealth in this country, a shift of the money from the middle class to the upper 10 percent of earners here in this country. In fact, since 2001, the figures show that worker productivity went up, while at the same time, 96 percent of the income growth went to the wealthiest 10 percent of this country. And so that's a clear indication that something is wrong with the policies that we have been following over the last 8 years.

And despite the wealth that has been transferred into the hands of a small minority of Americans, we still see that the pursuit of greed has brought us to the point where we're closer to a depression than we have been since the Great Depression. And so I'm happy to be a progressive.

The other side of that is conservative. Let's leave everything the way we want to leave it, and let's do business as usual.

We cannot do that.

So I'm happy to be a member of the Progressive Caucus espousing, along with yourself, new ideas; and it's a new time. It's time for change.

Mr. ELLISON. If the gentleman yields back.

Congressman JOHNSON, you know, we are the progressives. We want progress. And if you say you're a conservative, what, over the past 8 years, do you want to conserve? Do you want to conserve these exploding unemployment rates they've handed us? Do you want to conserve this war in Iraq and Afghanistan? Maybe you want to conserve this regime of deregulation which has allowed businesses, and particularly in the financial sector, to do whatever they want and not have to worry about consumers. Is that what you're trying to conserve?

The fact is the people of America don't want conservatism. They want a progressive vision. They're looking at things like I have up on this graph right here.

They're looking at Minnesota. We have an unemployment rate in 2008 of 6.9 percent. Last year, 2007, it was 4.7. In California, they're looking at 9.3 percent unemployment this year, 5.9 percent the year before.

What about our colleagues from Michigan, Congressman JOHNSON? We've got a serious problem.

The question is if you look at these high unemployment rates, and you look at every blue line is 2007 and every red line is 2008, as you can tell, unemployment is up all across the Nation everywhere.

These things did not happen by accident. They are the product of a set of policies, many of which were promulgated right in this gallery you and I are in right now. Many of the policies saying that poor people have too much money and rich people don't have enough money promulgated right here. Tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans,

no accountability. As a matter of fact, it was put into legislation that the whole credit default swap market would be excluded from regulation, and now we know that these derivative products cause so much risk in the system that we don't know what to do about it.

The fact is, the policies and the procedures that have brought this about were done right here during the last 8 years, and we are now going to project a progressive vision to get us out of it.

Let me just say this before I turn it over to you, Congressman.

America has suffered 11 straight months of joblessness, of increasing job losses, totaling more than two million in the last year, 1.3 million jobs lost in the last 3 months alone. The job losses totaled over 500,000 in November, the biggest 1-month jump in 34 years. Now that's serious business.

So, facing these kinds of things, Congressman, what would be your thought as to what we should be thinking about right now?

Let me yield to you.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Okay. Before I answer that, Congressman, I do want to talk about—you mentioned something very interesting and that is the lack of regulation in the financial markets. Oil futures contracts were taken out of the regulatory process by the laws of a senator who would become the Republican nominee for president's financial adviser. And now we have that candidate, that unsuccessful candidate for President, proposing his own economic plan, is what he said he was going to do.

And it took me back to as a young man, my dad decided that he wanted to get under the sink and do something with the plumbing. And he's like a college-educated guy. Never took any plumbing classes or anything. But anyway, we came out of that situation with puddles and puddles of water in the kitchen. So, you know, my mother called in the plumber. She did not entrust fixing what had been messed up to the guy who messed it up.

And so that's where we are right now with our economic plans in this country, our—we call it the stimulus package.

Mr. ELLISON. If I can reclaim my time.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

I yield back to the gentleman.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Yes. Thank you.

So we've got a group of folks who were right here as you say, Congressman ELLISON, they were right here in this very Chamber, and they had the leadership up until 2006; and they aided and abetted this country's decline and all of the things that contributed to it.

And so but now they want to dictate the solutions to getting us out of this morass. And it just doesn't make sense.

I hope the American people are paying great attention because my friends on the other side of the aisle, the only